(b) what steps have since been taken by Government and other member countries in pursuance of the terms of the agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) All the Member of States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) (India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) have ratified the Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

(b) Although the SAFTA Agreement was scheduled to come into force from 1st January, 2006, in view of the different budget period, the Member States would give effect to the phased Tariff Liberalization Programme of SAFTA from 1st July, 2006 (Nepal from 1st August, 2006) with the condition that the tariff liberalization for the first two years would be completed by 31st December, 2007.

Sustainable livelihood for small farmers

1646. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether any representation was received from the group of farmers who took part in a parallel "peoples camp" in Hong Kong during the recent WTO Ministerial meeting seeking Government's intervention to protect sustainable livelihood for small farmers in the context of the WTO negotiations;

(b) if so, the nature and extent of protection sought for small farmers; and

(c) what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) A number of representations were received from group of farmers and NGOs in connection with the Hong Kong Ministerial in December, 2005.

Essentially they emphasized that agriculture is a major source of livelihood for Indian farmers and their interests should be protected from the unfair agriculture trade practices adopted by developed countries,

which could compound the woes of Indian farmers. They advocated adequate protection to safeguard the interests of the Indian farmers.

(c) Government is fully aware of the concerns of Indian farmers and accordingly took a strong and principled stand during the Hong Kong Ministerial to safeguard their interests. India took a conscious position that the developing countries cannot be asked to reduce their agriculture tariffs as long as the developed countries continue to subsidize the domestic produce of their farmers and also extend export subsidies to them.

The issue was also collectively raised with like-minded countries that form the G-20 and G-33 Group. Consequently, the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration recognized the right of developing countries to self-designate an appropriate number of tariff lines as Special Products with a view to ensuring their food security, livelihood security and rural development needs. On these lines, zero or a minimal tariff reduction would be undertaken. Developing country members will also have a right to take recourse to a Special Safeguard Mechanism to guard against surge in volume of imports and also against price depressions.

Also, developing countries like India, with no commitments on reduction of aggregate measure of support, would be exempted from reduction in their-de-minimis support and in overall trade distorting support. Furthermore, the developing country members will also be able to continue to benefit from the provisions of providing subsidies on transport and marketing of their agriculture exports till 2018.

The negotiations are proceeding with a view to establish modalities in agriculture by 30 April, 2006, with draft Schedules to be submitted by July 31,2006, under an overall resolve by WTO Ministers at Hong Kong to complete the Doha Work Programme fully and conclude negotiations in 2006.

The Government has been holding stakeholder consultations to protect and pursue our national interest, in particular the interests of our farmers. Government is committed to intervene in a WTO- compatible manner, including by calibrating the applied tariffs within the bound duties, to protect their interests.

To protect the interests of farmers the Government has also put in place a suitable mechanism for monitoring the imports of sensitive items

and are committed to providing adequate protection to domestic producers through WTO compatible measures.

Expansion of Indian deep sea fishing fleet

1647. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Marine Products Export Development Authority has made any recommendation to expand the Indian deep sea fishing fleet;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) how many deep sea fishing vessels are required according to the Marine Products Export Development Authority to meet the requirements and exports;

(d) whether the Marine Products Export Development Authority would fund some of the purchase of such boats; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As per the report of the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), the following types of deep-sea fishing vessels would be required to exploit available deep sea resourses:

Type of Vessel	Nos.
Tuna long liners vessels registered length 24 metres and above	100
Tuna long liners/gill netters/mechanised vesels	500
Tuna purse-seiners	10
Pole & line vessels	50
Squid jiggers	10
Vertical longline/trap fishing	20
Pelagic/mid-water trawlers	10
Pilot project for Myctophids	2